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INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 10 TOKYO 002908

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAQ](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 12/21/09

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TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Asahi poll: Cabinet approval rating plunges to 48 PERCENT ; 74 PERCENT think PM has not demonstrated leadership

Mainichi:

Mainichi poll: Cabinet approval rating falls 9 points to 55 PERCENT ; 68 PERCENT concerned about policy toward U.S.

Yomiuri:

Ozawa's fund management body suspected to have omitted 400 million yen from report; Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office to interview Lower House member Ishikawa

Nikkei:

Survey of 100 company presidents: Half of them worried about double dip recession, yen's further appreciation, and policy

Sankei:

Only one case of seasonal influenza reported due to new flu

Tokyo Shimbun:

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Public Tokyo elementary schools to introduce two homeroom teacher system involving retired teachers starting in fiscal 2010

Akahata:

Akahata poll: Health checkup rates drop in 46 prefectures under medical insurance system for people 75 and older

EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Participation by disabled persons essential for policy to break down social barriers

(2) Japan must also pay more attention to Central Asia

Mainichi:

(1) Career training essential for high school graduates struggling to find jobs

(2) North Korea's denomination shows seriousness of system's inconsistency

Yomiuri:

(1) Spread of Dubai shock was prevented, but ...

(2) Solid science and technology strategy essential to survive against international competition

Nikkei:

(1) DPJ's expressway requests full of contradictions

(2) Set income cap on child allowances

Sankei:

(1) Flexible vaccination essential

(2) Think beyond uniform management of three Kansai airports

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Thinking about Obama administration in wintertime at beginning of the week

Akahata:

(1) Make COP15 a new starting point for advancement

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, December 20

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 21, 2009

10:07 Met Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano at his official residential quarters. Joined by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsui.

4) Hatoyama explains to Clinton that forcibly implementing Futenma relocation plan would be risky

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, December 19, 2009

Keiichi Kaneko, Copenhagen

Speaking to the press corps on the evening of Dec. 18 (early on the morning of Dec. 19, Japan time), Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama revealed that during a banquet hosted by Denmark's Queen he was asked by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who sat next to

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him, for an explanation of the process that led to the decision to give up on settling the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) before the end of the year.

The Prime Minister said that he had asked Clinton for her understanding, saying, "In the wake of the Democratic Party of Japan's electoral victory, there are growing expectations among people of Okinawa (seeking relocation outside the prefecture). I am well aware that the Japan-U.S. agreement carries much weight, but I also think it is very risky to forcibly implement (the existing plan to relocate Futenma to Henoko in the city of Nago within the prefecture). We are making efforts with new options in mind. I would like (the United States) to wait for a while."

The very fact that Clinton asked the Prime Minister for an explanation seems to reflect the fact that Washington is leery of his handling of the issue. The Prime Minister, however, indicated to the press corps that Clinton had expressed understanding of his explanation, saying, "I don't remember her exact words, but I got the message that she understood (my explanation) very well." The Prime Minister also said that although he had exchanged a few words of greeting with President Barack Obama during an informal COP15 summit, they did not touch on the Futenma relocation issue.

5) FM Okada says U.S. Marine Corps is necessary for Japan; brushes aside idea of Futenma relocation to Guam

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 19, 2009

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada stressed at a press conference on Dec. 18 that the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa is very mobile and that its presence is necessary for (the security of Japan). Okada made the statement in connection with the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa. Okada also expressed a negative view about the Social Democratic Party's call for relocating Futenma to Guam, saying, "If we expect the Marine Corps to serve as a deterrent, then the argument on whether they should leave Japan is irrelevant."

As of 2007, there were some 15,000 U.S. Marines deployed in the East Asia/Pacific region, and of them, 13,000 were in Japan.

"Geographically speaking, it is better to keep them in Okinawa rather than in Hokkaido or mainland Japan. Okinawa has strategic advantages," the foreign minister said. "It would take energy to move everything to another site. In that sense as well, Okinawa is more conceivable (than other places)."

6) DPJ's Ozawa takes wait-and-see attitude on Futenma out of deference to PM Hatoyama

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
December 19, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, who has intervened in the formulation of the budget, is taking a wait-and-see attitude on the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa. It appears that this is in deference to Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who is experiencing difficulties with his adoption of Ozawa's policy of an "equal

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Japan-U.S. alliance." However, if another crisis in which coalition partner Social Democratic Party (SDP) threatens to bolt the coalition occurs, it is likely that Ozawa will have to get involved.

Ozawa gives priority to the coalition and is negative about relocating the Futenma base to Henoko in Nago City as agreed upon in the Japan-U.S. agreement, but he is avoiding becoming actively involved in coordination on this issue. Ozawa's position on the Futenma issue can be gleaned from his recent statements and behavior.

Ozawa reportedly told a Diet member he met this week that, "It is unacceptable to pollute that beautiful sea," indicating his disapproval of Henoko relocation. He also pointed out at a political fund-raising party in Tokyo on Dec. 15 that, "Since the administration has changed, we need to think of the Futenma issue from a broad perspective even if there will be criticism."

However, even when SDP leader Mizuho Fukushima threatened in early December to leave the coalition in protest to moves to resolve the Futenma issue by the end of the year, Ozawa apparently did not take any action to settle the crisis. It is believed that the reason behind his silence is the fact that the Prime Minister is experiencing difficulties trying to implement Ozawa's policy of an "equal Japan-U.S. alliance."

From his experience serving as the Liberal Democratic Party secretary general during the Gulf crisis around 1990, Ozawa came to advocate that Japan should become a "normal country." His idea that Japan should share security responsibility with the U.S. while reducing the U.S. forces in Japan came to influence the DPJ's policies after he became the party's president in 2006. The DPJ issued its "Okinawa Vision" in 2008 which favored the relocation of the Futenma Air Station out of Okinawa or out of Japan.

Since late 2008, American experts on Japan have been warning Hatoyama, who was then DPJ secretary general, and other party officials that such a policy violates the Japan-U.S. agreement. However, a review of Okinawa Vision and deliberations on alternative proposals did not make any progress under Ozawa's presidency. Hatoyama replaced Ozawa as president in May 2009 in the midst of a political donation scandal. He simply maintained the foreign and security policies of Ozawa's presidency because he did not have time to prepare new policies.

If Ozawa defends his longstanding beliefs from his position as the party's secretary general, who takes no responsibility for foreign policy, this will only complicate the matter. At his meeting with New Party Daichi leader Muneyo Suzuki on Dec. 15, Ozawa said that, "I would like to simply watch how the Prime Minister's Official Residence handles the situation. If I speak up, it will cause a flare up."

However, Hatoyama intends to decide on Futenma's relocation site by next May during the regular Diet session. If he decides on Henoko, the question of the SDP's bolting the coalition will be rekindled, and this may bring chaos to the deliberation of bills and election cooperation. With regard to the May deadline, Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka stated on Dec. 17 that it "no longer exists." There are already signs of turmoil at this early stage. It appears that Ozawa is likely to come into the picture before the House of

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Councillors election (next summer).

7) Foreign Minister Okada to visit Russia on Dec. 27 to discuss territorial issue

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 19, 2009

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced on Dec. 18 that Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada will visit Russia on Dec. 27-29. Okada is expected to discuss on Dec. 28 mainly the issue of the Northern Territories with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. He will be the first minister of the Yukio Hatoyama cabinet to visit Moscow.

At a press conference, he said, "On the Russian side, there is a desire for Japanese technology and capital," pointing out that there is a possibility that economic cooperation will lead to a breakthrough in the deadlocked territorial issue.

Okada also said: "Since the issue has remained unresolved for a long time, it is closely associated with Russian national sentiments. So we should not be optimistic about a settlement, but will gradually move forward with negotiations."

8) Chen Yonghua most likely candidate to be next Chinese ambassador to Japan

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
December 20, 2009

Fumiji Matsuura, Beijing

Several sources familiar with Japan-U.S. relations revealed on Dec. 19 that current Chinese Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (ROK), Chen Yonghua (55), who is well versed in Japan, is viewed as a possible candidate to be the next ambassador to Japan, succeeding incumbent Ambassador Cui Tiankai, 57, who will likely to be promoted to the post of vice foreign minister. Cheng is expected to arrive at post in late January at the earliest.

Cheng studied at Soka University in Japan. He worked at the Chinese Embassy in Japan for about 20 years, or four terms, since 1977. He has been serving as ambassador to the ROK since 2008, after having served as ambassador to Malaysia since 2006. He is proficient in Japanese and has many friends in Japanese political and business circles. Therefore, expectations for his appointment as the next ambassador to Japan had been high. The Chinese government appears to be willing to improve a strategic reciprocal relationship with Japan by appointing "a member of the Japan school" as ambassador. Meanwhile, although Cui has served in key posts in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, he had never served in the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo before he took his present post in September 2007. He will reportedly no longer be in charge of Japan affairs once he becomes vice foreign minister. It is uncertain whether Cui will serve as chair of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

9) Ozawa becomes regular person: DPJ's Watanabe

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
December 21, 2009

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Asked about Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa on a TV Asahi program on Dec. 20, Kozo Watanabe, a former DPJ supreme advisor, said, "For the past week, he has been happily making efforts at center stage in the political arena. I think he is now a very regular person." His comment indicated a "change" in Ozawa, who led a large DPJ delegation to China and has begun to get involved in the compilation of the state budget for fiscal 2010.

Watanabe reflected on the past, saying, "Mr. Ozawa has had an influence since he was young. (In the past) he did jobs that other people did not want to do behind the scenes, and eventually had someone else stand under the political spotlight. I thought Mr. Ozawa was that kind of a person."

In connection with the fact that Ozawa did not reappoint him as a supreme advisor, Watanabe said, "I was disliked by him. We were on very close terms in the past."

10) Ozawa aims for DPJ's majority in next Upper House election, to maintain coalition government after election

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
December 21, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa gave a speech at a party organized by the DPJ Iwate chapter in Morioka City on Dec. 20. He reiterated that the DPJ's goal is to win an absolute majority in the House of Councillors election next summer. He also discussed the management of the administration after the election, saying: "Of course, we will not abandon and will maintain our cooperative relationship with the People's New Party and the Social Democratic Party." He thus indicated that even if the DPJ wins an absolute majority, the three-party coalition framework will continue.

Ozawa asserted emphatically, "At a critical moment, controlling the majority in both houses of the Diet is an administration's greatest strength." Fifty-three of the DPJ's seats in the Upper House (including Upper House President Satsuki Eda) are up for election in the next election. The DPJ needs to win at least 60 seats to secure an absolute majority. At a news conference held before the party in Morioka, Ozawa said, "We will make every effort to win at least 61 seats."

11) U.S. government to call for talks with Japan on review of postal privatization plan, to seek equal competitive conditions

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
December 21, 2009

Takashi Osumi, Washington

The U.S. government has decided to call on the Japanese government to hold talks on its review of the postal privatization plan (initiated by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi). Deputy USTR (U.S. Trade Representatives) Demetrios Marantis revealed Washington's policy in an interview with the Nikkei. The policy came about because of the enactment of a bill to freeze the sale of government-owned shares in the Japan postal group and the Hatoyama administration's decision to review the postal plan. Reflecting growing concern among the firms doing business in Japan about possible favoritism toward the Japanese postal group, the U.S.

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government now judges it necessary to hold talks with the Japanese government.

Marantis stated in the interview:

"It is up to the Japanese government to determine how to treat the Japanese postal group. But we hope that Japan and the U.S. will hold talks with Japan to prevent the group from having an advantage in competition with foreign firms."

Marantis pointed out three areas - insurance, banking, and transportation - as the areas in which foreign firms could be placed at a disadvantage as a result of reviewing the postal privatization plan. He indicated that Japan and the U.S. should discuss competitive conditions in these areas.

The Japanese government intends to submit a bill to review the postal privatization plan that includes future business plans to the regular Diet session that will commence early next year.

12) Japan, South Korea to hold working-level talks in Seoul today aimed at resuming EPA negotiations

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 21, 2009

The governments of Japan and South Korea will hold a deputy-director-level meeting in Seoul today to discuss whether to resume negotiations aimed at concluding a bilateral economic partnership agreement (EPA). The working-level talks will be held for the first time in five months and will be the second round since the talks were upgraded to the deputy-director level during a bilateral summit meeting in June. EPA negotiations between Japan and South Korea have been suspended since November 2004 as the two countries failed to find common ground on such areas as agriculture. Expectations for an EPA between Japan and South Korea are growing in the Japanese business world, but there is deep-seated concern about an inflow of farm products into the Japanese market. Meanwhile, many South Korean government officials are worried about an expansion of its trade deficit.

13) Survey of 100 company presidents: Half worry about double-dip recession

NIKKEI (Top play) (Lead paragraph)
December 21, 2009

A "survey of 100 company presidents" conducted by the Nikkei revealed that 47.2 PERCENT of respondents were worried that the Japanese economy could turn sour again before it was put on a solid recovery track, the so-called "double-dip" recession. This figure is about 10 percentage points more than in the previous survey in September. Many cited the rising value of the yen and uncertainty over the future of policies as the major reasons for concern. The percentage of those who said the economy was recovering also declined, from 70 PERCENT to almost 50 PERCENT. Amid waning expectations for economic growth, the survey found that many business leaders were considering the possibility of allocating managerial resources to Asian countries other than Japan.

14) Poll: Cabinet support spirals down to 55 PERCENT ; 51 PERCENT disapprove of decision to carry over Futenma issue to next year

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YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged)
December 20, 2009

The Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a telephone-based spot nationwide public opinion survey on Dec. 18-19, after the government had given up settling the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in Okinawa Prefecture before the year is out. In the survey, the Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 55 PERCENT, down 4 percentage points from the last survey conducted Dec. 4-6. The nonsupport rate was 33 PERCENT (29 PERCENT in the last survey). Respondents were asked if they approved of the government's decision to give up reaching a conclusion by the end of the year. In response to this question, 51 PERCENT answered "no." They were also asked if they thought the decision would have a negative impact on Japan-U.S. relations. To this question, 68 PERCENT answered "yes." The public's dissatisfaction with the deferment of a conclusion and their concern about the deterioration of Japan-U.S. relations seem to have brought about the continual fall of the support rate.

In the survey, respondents were further asked where Futenma airfield should be relocated. To this question, 35 PERCENT chose "out of Japan," with 34 PERCENT preferring to relocate it to the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago "in accordance with a bilateral agreement reached between Japan and the United States" and 14 PERCENT insisting on relocating it "somewhere outside Okinawa Prefecture." Meanwhile, 64 PERCENT answered "no" when asked if they approved of the tripartite ruling coalition of the Democratic Party of Japan, Social Democratic Party, and People's New Party. The public seems to be dissatisfied with a DPJ that is being pushed around by the SDP and the PNP.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 43 PERCENT (42 PERCENT in the last survey) and the Liberal Democratic Party at 18 PERCENT (19 PERCENT in the last survey).

15) Poll: Cabinet support drops 9 points to 55 PERCENT ; 68 PERCENT

worried about U.S. ties

MAINICHI (Top play) (Abridged)
December 21, 2009

The Mainichi Shimbun conducted a telephone-based public opinion survey across the nation on Dec. 19-20. In the survey, the rate of public support for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and his cabinet was 55 PERCENT, down 9 percentage points from the last survey conducted Nov. 21-22. Respondents were asked if they approved of the Hatoyama cabinet's decision to defer its conclusion to next year on the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. In response to this question, 51 PERCENT answered "no." Respondents were also asked if they were worried about the Hatoyama government's policy toward the United States. To this question, 68 PERCENT answered "yes." The Hatoyama administration's flip-flopping over Futenma and other issues appears to have impressed the public with Prime Minister Hatoyama's lack of leadership and have consequently led to the drop in public support for his cabinet.

The Hatoyama cabinet's inaugural approval rating scored 77 PERCENT, the second highest ever, in a survey conducted this September. In the surveys that followed, however, its support rate continued to

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drop. Three months later, it dropped 22 points, nearly a third of the inaugural rating. The disapproval rating only inched up slightly. This time around, however, it was 34 PERCENT, showing a sharp increase of 13 points from the last survey. In the breakdown of reasons given for not supporting the Hatoyama cabinet, the proportion of those who answered that it is "because he cannot be expected to display leadership" increased from 16 PERCENT in the last survey to 42 PERCENT in the latest survey. Among those who support the Hatoyama cabinet, "the nature of politics is likely to change" accounted for 82 PERCENT. The figure indicates that the public's expectations for change still prop up the support rate.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties as well, the ruling Democratic Party of Japan dropped 4 points from the last survey to 35 PERCENT, posting a further drop from its all-time low of 45 PERCENT. The proportion of those have no particular party affiliation was 33 PERCENT, remaining flat from the last survey. Among the unaffiliated respondents, the cabinet support rate was 41 PERCENT, falling below 50 PERCENT from the 51 PERCENT rating in the last survey. On Dec. 24, the Hatoyama cabinet will have been in office for 100 days. However, the honeymoon phase with a sense of hope is now about to be replaced by calls for specific results. The public, particularly people with no party affiliation, seems to be casting a severe eye on the cabinet.

16) Poll: Cabinet support falls below 50 PERCENT

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)
December 19, 2009

The public approval rating for the Hatoyama cabinet was 46.8 PERCENT in a public opinion survey conducted by Jiji Press on Dec. 11-14, down 7.6 percentage points from last month. The figure dropped for the second month in a row and fell below 50 PERCENT for the first time since the cabinet came into office this September. Meanwhile, the disapproval rating was 30.3 PERCENT, up 7.5 points from last month, reaching the 30 PERCENT range for the first time. In the breakdown of reasons given for not supporting the Hatoyama cabinet, a sharply increasing number of people cited Prime Minister Hatoyama's lack of leadership. This can be taken as reflecting his and his cabinet ministers' flip-flopping over the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in Okinawa Prefecture and over the amount of government bonds to be issued.

The survey was conducted across the nation on a face-to-face basis, with a total of 2,000 persons chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over. The response rate was 66.1 PERCENT.

17) Poll: Hatoyama cabinet's popularity nosedives to 48 PERCENT

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged)
December 21, 2009

The public approval rating for Prime Minister Hatoyama's cabinet tumbled to 48 PERCENT in a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey conducted by the Asahi Shimbun on Dec. 19-20, sustaining a marked drop from the 62 PERCENT rating in the last survey conducted Nov. 14-15. The disapproval rating for the Hatoyama cabinet was 34 PERCENT (21 PERCENT in the last survey). In the survey, a total of 74 PERCENT answered "no" when asked if they thought Prime Minister Hatoyama was displaying leadership. Half of those who do not support the Hatoyama cabinet cited "action" as a

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reason.

Broken down by political parties supported, the Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 84 PERCENT among those who support the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (92 PERCENT in the last survey) and 13 PERCENT among those who support the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (24 PERCENT in the last survey). Among those with no particular party affiliation, the support rate was 39 PERCENT and the nonsupport rate was 27 PERCENT in the last survey. This time, however, the support rate was 24 PERCENT, with the nonsupport rate at 45 PERCENT. As seen from these figures, the disapproval rating topped the approval rating for the first time since the Hatoyama cabinet came into office.

In the survey, respondents were asked if they thought Hatoyama was displaying leadership. In response to this question, only 18 PERCENT answered "yes." Even among those who support the Hatoyama cabinet, "yes" accounted for only 30 PERCENT, with "no" reaching 62 PERCENT.

Respondents were also asked if they approved of the Hatoyama cabinet with regard to the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield. To this question, 60 PERCENT answered "no," with 30 PERCENT saying "yes." Among LDP supporters, "no" accounted for 78 PERCENT.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 42 PERCENT (46 PERCENT in the last survey), with the LDP at 18 PERCENT (14 PERCENT in the last survey). The DPJ's popularity edged down with the cabinet support rate's decline but still remains high.

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